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INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6178
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3492
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7353
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4615
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1869
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1912
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4078
RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4505
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL ECON BL

SUBJECT: A WORRIED MORALES ATTEMPTS TO WOO THE MIDDLE CLASS

¶1. (U) President Morales spoke October 12 at a rally intended to "defend Bolivian democracy," as well as to close the international indigenous meeting held in La Paz October 8-12. Speaking for forty minutes to a bussed in and largely passive crowd we estimate at approximately 6,000 (but which press reports put from less than 10,000 up to one estimate of 50,000), Morales highlighted his government's achievements in office and repeatedly thanked the middle class for its support. He touted the success of hydrocarbons nationalization, which he said had flooded the treasury with additional funds, as well as his government's increase in the minimum wage, the first in five years. He also emphasized the GOB's anti-corruption campaign, promising that his government will not defraud the Bolivian people.

¶2. (U) In addition to reviewing GOB progress, Morales warned his audience that those opposed to Bolivia's revolution continue to make false accusations to prejudice the GOB. He declared that "this revolution is going forward with or without Evo Morales-- nobody is going to stop it." In response to speculation his government is stoking about possible coup attempts, Morales disingenuously said the rumors were intended to intimidate the GOB. He again criticized the media, stating that they used to call the MAS narcotraffickers, but now call them "ignorant and incapable."

Finally, Morales defended his radical vision of the Constituent Assembly. He said some people want to confuse the Bolivian people by making them believe that the Assembly's "plenipotentiary" ("originaria" in Spanish) nature means that the Assembly is "indigenous." Morales made clear that instead, "originaria" means that the Assembly is superior to all other state powers, which is necessary in order to "refound" Bolivia.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Morales' speech had an unusually moderate tone (for him), demonstrating a clear desire to reach out for middle class support. Defending the GOB's program, Morales also admitted that his government should do more. He promised to "organize better" in order to change Bolivia, almost apologizing for GOB political failures at the Constituent Assembly, and regarding the mining crisis and recent blockades. Morales did not single out the United States during his speech except to mention that the United States and other countries "don't want our migration" but will have to accept our products via trade. The disappointingly low attendance for the rally appears to be an indicator of Morales' sinking popularity. The mostly

indigenous crowd, in large part bused-in cocaleros who distributed coca from trucks bearing "coca is not cocaine" signs, probably means that Morales' political instincts are right-- he needs to reach out to the middle class. End comment.

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